

Minutes of the SC NRCS Civil Rights Advisory Committee

10:00 AM April 9, 2008

Members/Advisors Present

Sabrenna Bryant-Chairperson & MAL

Antron Williams -Treasurer & MAL

Charlie Ogg-Secretary & MAL

Rafael Mendez-HEPM/APIPM

Cliff Eaddy- AIANPM

Wayne Henderson-DEPM

Elyse Benson - MAL

Amy Maxwell-Outreach Advisor & 1890's Liaison Advisor

Craig Ellis-Title VI Advisor

Members/Advisors Absent:

LaKeisha Hill- BEPM

Lisa Good-FWPM

Dory Reeves-Title VII Advisor

- I. Call to Order. Bryant called to order the SC Civil Rights Committee (CRC) at 10:00 AM.
- II. Approval of minutes. Benson amended section V. of the February 13, 2008 minutes to read "federally recognized tribes" rather than "approved tribes." Henderson made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Benson seconded the motion. Motion passed.
- III. Treasurer's Report. Williams reported the only expenditure was submitted by Maxwell for \$600 to the SC Young Farmer and Agribusiness Association Conservation Award.
- IV. Ongoing activities and approaching deadlines.
 - a. *Current Developments* Articles.
Bryant reported Hill submitted an article to *Current Developments* for the February edition. Good also submitted an article for Women's History Month.

Bryant noted Elyse Benson is currently featured in the NRCS Employee Spotlight on my.NRCS. Maxwell wants to submit more SC employees to the spotlight.
- V. AIANPM Report.

Eaddy is the chair of the Southeast American Indian Workgroup. This is a nine state workgroup that meets monthly by phone. Through the teleconferences the group has completed defining its Statement of Purpose.

The annual training conference is schedule to be held in Spokane, WA.

VI. BEPM Report. Bryant reported the following activities submitted by Hill.

Magazine Subscription -*Minority Landowners* has not yet been purchased. This has been put on hold for state budget related reasons.

Hill participated in National BEPM teleconference 03/05/08. Major topics discussed included barriers, ways to overcome barriers, recruitment and retention. Minutes from the teleconference are available if anyone wants them.

On 03/05/08 Hill met with Denise Grant, Interim Director of the Environmental Sciences Field Station at South Carolina State University to talk to students at Benedict College about Natural Resources related career opportunities. Further, Hill discussed with Mrs. Grant the courses necessary to be considered for a position with NRCS.

Hill forwarded list of potential student/career interns to Doug and Dory. This list was provided by the National BEPM. This list was compiled from all the BEPMs submitting their contacts to the National BEPM.

Hill is working with Dory Reeves and faculty at Alabama A&M University to possibly conduct a recruiting trip in the next couple of weeks.

VII. DEPM Report. Henderson attended the SC Dept. of Vocational Rehab Business Applications Council meeting February 13, 2008. The meeting was attended by private and public employers who hire from Vocational Rehab. The focus of the meeting was to ensure students are taking appropriate course in computer applications for their respective fields of employment.

Henderson referenced the recent SLT items of interest sent to field offices by Mr. Glasgow concerning the lack of handicap accessibility at some field offices. Henderson says this letter conflicts with a 2004 spreadsheet (submitted to the CRC for review) showing SC field offices were "Good" in many categories. Maxwell suggested following up with Frank Wilcox about the discrepancies.

Henderson said a new checklist is available for use during Civil Rights reviews. The new list unifies separate list that were used by NRCS, RD, and FSA.

Henderson has submitted to Dory Reeves a list of potential NRCS employees who are students with disabilities. Many of the students, however, are not taking the necessary courses for NRCS career paths. Benson stated the X-188 application defines coursework requirements.

VIII. FWPM Report. No report.

IX. HEPM/APIPM Report. Mendez reported the National Association of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees meets July 7-11, 200 at Madison, WI.

A Cinco de Mayo celebration is scheduled at Saluda Shoals Park. Cinco de Mayo is a Mexican celebration, and because Mendez is Puerto Rican and unfamiliar with the celebration, he will speak about Hispanic culture.

Mendez circulated for review several items (newspapers, brochures, and web pages) the Hispanic community uses for advertising. He inquired as to whether NRCS can advertise its programs in these formats. Maxwell said NRCS cannot pay for advertising, but it may be possible to list the agency in the "List of Services" sections.

Benson asked Mendez if he would recommend a good Spanish/English dictionary. He will forward information to her.

Bryant circulated a glossary of English and Spanish NRCS terms.

Maxwell reported that she submitted the completed DVD nomination for the Ruelas Family of Modoc, SC (Edgefield County), an outstanding Hispanic small farm family who was featured as SC's nominee for the 1st annual Hispanic Farm Farmer of the Year award via the national HEPM committee. The video was accompanied by a success story and conservation accomplishments write up. She thanked SC HEPM Rafael Mendez for his translation assistance, and Shaun Worley, the Edgefield DC for nominating the Ruelas family. The national HEPM conference is this summer, where they will feature the winner of the Hispanic Farmer of the Year, and hopefully, the Ruelas family will be recognized for their outstanding conservation ethic.

X. MAL Report.

Benson inquired about the CRC roll of members-at-large. Bryant said members-at-large support the committee in several ways. MAL hold positions on the committee such as Chair, Treasurer, or Secretary, and attend civil rights reviews.

Bryant reported on the Sexual Harassment Prevention training several NRCS employees were required to attend March 4, 2008. The training

encompassed workplace harassment of all types and treated sexual harassment as an issue within workplace harassment.

Bryant circulated the CRC flyer she prepared and distributed to field offices. The flyer lists CRC committee contact information and describes the Goals and Objectives of the committee.

XI. Outreach Report. Maxwell reported the following Outreach highlights.

-Maxwell made contact with the new American Indian Liaison at the Council for Minority Affairs in Columbia. She invited the liaison to attend the April 21 RC&D Coordinators meeting in an effort to generate partnership projects between NRCS/RC&D/ and the American Indian community in SC, both Federally recognized tribes, as well as state recognized tribes.

-Maxwell mentioned that Elyse Benson is featured on my.NRCS under the Employee Spotlight. She also encouraged other employees to recommend fellow coworkers who have interesting talents/interests to be featured in stories like this one. Contact her and she will follow up with interviews.

-Maxwell will travel to Charleston on April 10th to attend a meeting regarding the SC Market Maker project, a collaboration between NRCS, SC Dept. of Ag, and Clemson University to create a website that is a comprehensive listing of small and niche farmers/producers in SC. Currently, the website is being developed by the vendor. More info about the tool and an example is available at <http://www.marketmaker.uiuc.edu/>. Maxwell said that NRCS' role will be to help populate the site with small and niche farmer contacts.

-The SC Small Farmer Wholesale Auction Market is still on track for a mid-May opening. A market manager has been hired and the Jasper County building where the market will be housed is still under development

-Lengthy discussion ensued regarding outreach in relation to recruitment, and the need to allow high school age kids to learn more about NRCS, careers available, and how to attain an NRCS career by following a specific course/major path once in college. Discussion centered around perhaps developing a Bootcamp SC, a 2 or 3 day program in SC that would expose 9-10th graders to the work that we do, both field and in the office, and give them a taste of our agency so that when they are considering their college/career path, they will have an idea of the types of courses/majors they need to pursue to be eligible for NRCS careers.

XII. Title VI Report. No report.

- XIII. Title VII Report. No report.
- XIV. Cultural Awareness Training
- Maxwell filled in for CAT Committee Chair LaKeisha Hill on April 8th to lead the planning meeting for the August 21st event. The event will take place in Columbia, at Seawell's, beginning at 9:30 a.m. Agenda has been developed and will feature a presentation by NRCS employee Elyse Benson, a discussion on Romanian culture, a presentation by a counselor from Palmetto Assistive Animals and her canine friend, and an entertaining motivational speaker. The committee is still seeking ideas for entertainment, so suggestions are welcome. Total attendees expected are 270 including RD employees. The next planning meeting will be May 7th.
- XV. Other Business. Mendez asked about possibly separating HEPM/APIPM into two special emphasis groups. Maxwell said this issue has previously surfaced but has not been fully explored. Eaddy said producers of Asian descent are increasing in his area. Ellis suggested Bryant ask Mr. Glasgow about setting APIPM apart from HEPM. If Mr. Glasgow concurs, Benson agreed to be the APIPM SEPM.
- Ogg asked if another CRC member can attend the Edisto/Savannah CR review July 23, 2008. Williams said he will switch, and Ogg will attend the Hampton review. Ogg will contact Doug Deaderick about the change as the Hampton review has been rescheduled.
- XVI. Next Meeting. The next meeting of the CRC is 10:00 AM June 11, 2008. Other FY08 meeting dates are August 13 and October 8.
- XVII. Adjourn. Bryant called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Benson motioned to adjourn. Williams seconded the motion. Motion passed. The CRC adjourned to the NRCS conference room to view the Ruelas Family video.